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Mermet Lake

CONSERVATION AREA

CONSERVATION

THE AREA

Mermet Lake Conservation Area is an old cypress swamp which has been made into a waterfowl hunting area. Primarily the area was developed for duck hunting but several thousand Canada, blue, and show geese frequent the area each winter. The shallow lake is also very productive for largemouth bass, channel catfish, and most panfish. The lake is closed in October prior to waterfowl hunting season and is re-opened in December directly after waterfowl season. The original acreage acquired in 1949, in Massac County, one-half mile southwest of Mermet on U.S. 45, has been increased to 2,580 acres, of which 452 are permanent water.

NATURAL FEATURES

One of the first major developments at Mermet Refuge was the construction of a system of levees, creating a lake in 1962. The lake serves as a reservoir and a supply of water to temporarily flood two walk-in duck hunting areas and a duck hunting area of permanent blinds that are allocated a no charge daily draw system. The water in the lake is dropped two to four feet each fall to accommodate the duck hunters. After waterfowl season the water is returned to the lake and due to lack of rainfall runoff, a system of wells and pumps are used to return the lake to pool stage.

Approximately 200 acres of millet, buckwheat, milo, and corn are planted annually in the open fields in the waterfowl blind area. The food attracts waterfowl to the area and greatly enhances waterfowl hunting success. Waterfowl hunting in the area close at noon enabling the waterfowl to have undisturbed use of the area in the afternoon.

A good population of deer, squirrel, birds, and furbearing forest game exists in the timbered part of the area. Endangered species, such as the purple galinule and rice rat, have been sighted on the area. The state record willow oak is also located on the area.

FACILITIES

Picnicking — A few picnic tables with camp stoves are available in two areas. Pit toilets are on the grounds. There is no drinking water or refreshment stands and camping is prohibited.

Fishing — The shallow lake has most types of structure such as rip-rap, standing and fallen trees, depressions, lotus pads, and stick-ups. The lake has largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, sunfish, channel catfish, buffalo, carp, and other feeder fish and rough fish.

Hiking — The area has two trails. The nature preserve has a small, 1/4 mile, interpretive trail with a small boardwalk extending into the cypress swamp. Another nature area has a 1-mile interpretive trail with tree identification along the way.

Boating — The 452-acre lake with a maximum depth of 12 feet, is a major attraction at the refuge. Private boats use the two launching ramps and motors up to 10 h.p. are permitted. Rental boats, paddles, and cushions are available from the site staff.

Hunting — Check with District Wildlife Manager or the Refuge Manager for hunting dates. During waterfowl season, a check station is in operation and a daily drawing is held for the no charge use of the 25 permanent blinds. Two flooded walk-in areas are also provided. Other hunting such as dove, deer, squirrel, rabbit, and quail is permitted in designated areas.

MERMET SWAMP NATURE PRESERVE

At the southwest corner of Mermet Lake Conservation Area, 43 acres have been set aside for non-game, rare, and endangered species. An old growth forest of pin oak, sweet gum, and swamp white oak occurs at the west end of the preserve. A second growth community of bald cypress, swamp cottonwood, and pumpkin ash occurs in the swamp. Red oak, white oak, and tulip poplar predominate on the uplands. Red iris, arrow arum, and American snowbell bush are some of the unusual plants present. An interpretive hiking trail approximately 1/4 mile in length winds through this area. A raised observation platform extends from the trail into the swamp.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Groups of 25 or mor persons will not be admitted to any state site unless permission from the Site Superintendent has been obtained to use the facilities. In addition, groups of minors must have adequate supervision and at least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state sites are within easy access of every part of Illinois. Lodges, cabins, and dining rooms are important features at Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, and Giant City; White Pines Forest has cabins and dining rooms only. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

Most state sites are open year-round, except on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to facilities is by foot only.

For more details about this site, contact the District Wildlife Manager, Union County Refuge, R.R. #2, Jonesboro, 62952, phone 618/833-5175 or Refuge Manager, R.R. #1, Belknap, 62908, phone 618/524-5577. For information on other Illinois sites, write the Department of Conservation, 524 S. Second St., Springfield, Illinois 62706.

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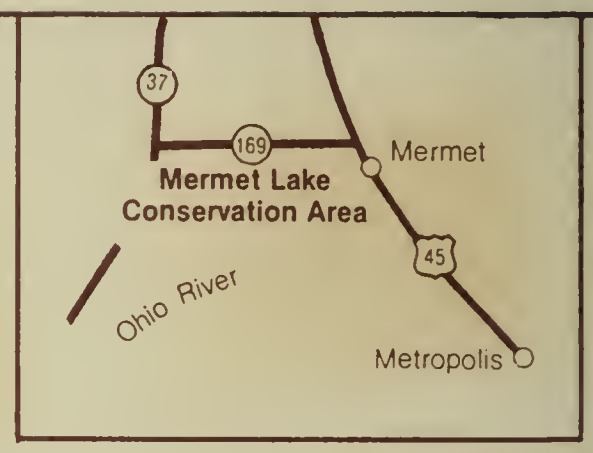
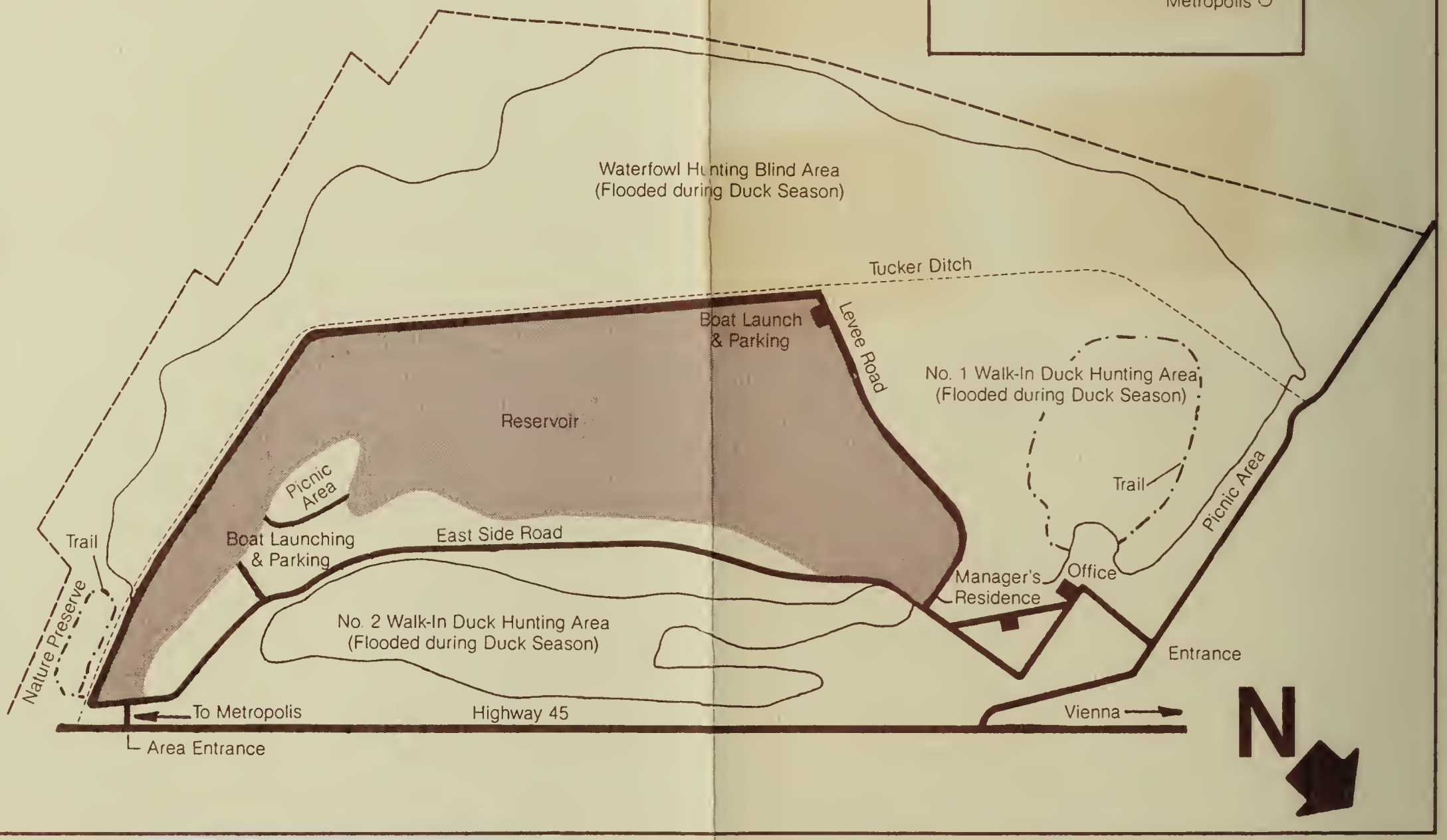
Area Maps





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